The India-EU. Joint Declaration provides a blueprint for upgrading the relationship to a qualitatively higher level. An Agenda for Action which encompasses joint initiatives in the political, commercial and economic fields was also agreed upon.

(c) No, Sir. Both sides, however, recognised that the current volume of bilateral trade and investment between EU and India falls far short of its potential and agreed to work jointly to promote further economic cooperation.

(d) The visit provided a useful opportunity to convey our concerns regarding trade-related protectionist measures as well as to share views on WTO-related matters. It was agreed that both sides would work to progressively liberalise trade, oppose protectionist tendencies and attempt to obtain an open, equitable and non-discriminatory rule-based multilateral trading system.

Appointments in High Commission/Embassies in Foreign Countries

†564. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK:
PROF. RAM GOPAL YADAV:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the rules fixed for appointments being made in the High Commissions/Embassies in the foreign countries are followed; if so, whether the sanction had been sought from the Ministry of External Affairs for the appointment in the Indian Embassy in London and Consulate General in Birmingham;

(b) if so, how Government had to suffer losses of crores of rupees due to irregularities committed in these embassies; and

(c) if not, the action taken by Government after fixing responsibility for the irregularities by the said embassies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) The officials of the Ministry are posted to our Missions/Posts abroad in accordance with the rules and on the basis of a number of

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

considerations which include, inter-alia, their seniority suitability and experience for a particular assignment, keeping in mind also the principle of rotation. The postings are decied by the three Boards constituted for the purpose: the Foreign Service Board (FSB), the Senior Establishment Board (SEB) and the Junior Establishment Board (JEB). The approval of the Ministry was duly obtained for appointments in the Indian Embassy in London and Consulate General in Birmingham.

All expenditure in Embassies and Consulates are incurred as per rules laid down on the subject by Government of India. Any unauthorised expenditure is detected by regular audit objections and corrective action is taken.

Extension of STPI Centre at Guwahati

565. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the extension of the Software Technology Park of India (STPI) centre has been opened at Guwahati;

(b) the present programme of the centre opened at Guwahati ;

(c) whether there is any plan to open unit centre in other States of North Eastern Region; and

(d) the proposed unit centre of that extension of STPI centre?

THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) Software Technology Park (STP), Guwahati is establishing High Speed Data Communication (HSDC) facility which will become operational by 15th August, 2000. This centre will also be providing incubation facility to the software exporting units from different States of North East including Sikkim. STP, Guwahati will initially be supporting hub/extension centre each at Gangtok (Sikkim) and Agartala (Tripura) respectively. Once the entrepreneurs establish themselves and set up software exporting units in their State, the STPI would consider establishing additional hub centres in the other North Eastern States.